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Urban District of Buckfastleigh.

THE

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

FOR THE YEAR 1925.

Mortimer Bros., Printers & Publishers, Totnes.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE

Urban District of Buckfastleigh

For the Year 1925.



Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present to you my Annual Report as your Medical Officer for 1925.

I am directed to note any important events which have taken place within the last five years, which have any bearing on the health or well-being of the district, this being what is known as a "Survey" Report.

It seems to me that three very striking changes have taken place during this period:—

1. The opening of the Abbey Church.
2. The growth of the Fellmongery Department of the C.W.S.
3. The development of Buckfast as a building site.

To refer to these in detail:—

1. The opening of the Abbey Church has brought a vast number of visitors to Buckfast, and as most of these have come in cars or chars-a-banc, there has been considerable difficulty in regulating the traffic, and until arrangements were made, some inconvenience was caused. Now that the Council has provided parking places for cars and chars-a-banc, this should not occur.

For this season also a large parking place for cars has been provided inside the Abbey grounds.

2. The growth of the Fellmongery Department of the C.W.S. affords employment at the present to between 60 and 70 men and women, and as extensive building operations are in progress it is evident that extension is expected. During a recent visit, I was impressed with the care that is taken to protect the workers from the effects of the chrome preparation used in the process.

3. The development of Buckfast as a building site appears to me to be likely to involve the Council in fresh expenditure on sewers. Four bungalows have been built at Grange Green, and two houses of considerable size along Grange Road. These are all connected with the existing sewer.

Other bungalows, large and small, are, however, built and being built, beyond the reach of this, and are at pre-

sent dependent on cesspit drainage, for which the soil is unsuitable.

The Council has the matter under consideration.

1. GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (acres), 1,472; population (1925), 2,326; number of inhabited houses (1925), 673; number of families or separate occupiers (1925), 676; rateable value £10,382; sum represented by a penny rate, £34.

2. EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR.

Births.—Males, 14; Females, 15; total births, 29. All legitimate.

Birth rate, 12.46. Birth rate in 1924, 12.03; 1923, 13.59; 1922, 15.45.

The birth rate for England and Wales was 18.3.

Deaths.—Males, 13; females, 19.

Death rate, 12.46. Death rate in 1924, 12.44; 1923, 8.75; 1922, 11.92; 1921, 19.

The death rate for England and Wales was 12.2.

One infant, under one year old, died of congenital defects, giving an infantile mortality rate of 34.82 per 1,000 births registered.

The corresponding rate for England and Wales was 75.

No woman died in, or in consequence of, child birth.

Causes of death as registered:—

Bronchitis	...	...	2
Cancer, malignant disease	...	...	1
Cerebral hemorrhage	...	...	3
Heart disease	...	...	2
Gastric Ulcer	...	...	1
Tuberculosis, pulmonary	...	...	1
Tuberculosis, other	...	...	1
Whooping Cough	...	...	4
Senile decay	...	...	7
Other defined causes	...	...	7

The tragic note in this mortality table is the death from whooping cough and its complications, of four children under three years of age.

Age incidence:—

Under 1 year	...	...	1
Under 3 years	...	...	4
Under 5 years	...	...	0
Under 10 years	...	...	0
Under 15 years	...	...	0
Under 25 years	...	...	1
Under 35 years	...	...	2
Under 45 years	...	...	0
Under 55 years	...	...	1
Under 65 years	...	...	2
Under 70 years	...	...	4
Under 75 years	...	...	4
Under 80 years	...	...	3
Over 80 years	...	...	7

Of 18 deaths, the average age was 73.

3.—NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

One case of scarlet fever, and one case of pneumonia were notified.

4. CAUSES OF SICKNESS.

There is nothing worthy of mention under this heading.

5. SUMMARY OF NURSING ARRANGEMENTS, Etc.

(a) General.—There is a District Nurse working under the Devon County Nursing Association. The Local Authority does not assist financially, and has no control over the Nurse, who does her work most admirably, and is always ready to give any assistance.

(b) For Infectious Diseases—A great advance has been made in this direction during the year.

Arrangements have been made whereby any case of notifiable infectious disease may be removed to the Paignton Hospital, if effective isolation at home is impossible. This arrangement has proved satisfactory in practice, and has been welcomed by everyone.

(c) Midwives.—The Nurse aforesaid is a trained midwife, and is the only one practising in the district.

(d) There are no Clinics or Treatment Centres.

(e) There are no Hospitals provided or subsidised by the Local Authority for any other purpose than that stated above.

The Cottage Hospital at Ashburton is available for surgical and medical cases, and is largely used, but receives no financial assistance from the Council.

6. LABORATORY WORK.

Advantage is taken of the County Laboratory for pathological examinations.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is issued when necessary.

7. SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

The Staff consists of a Medical Officer and a Sanitary Inspector, both of whom are part-time officers.

The Sanitary Inspector has made his usual periodical examinations of Bake-houses, Dairies, Slaughter-houses, etc., the details of which are shown in his separate report.

There has been no occasion to take action in any case.

8. HOUSING.

Number of new houses erected during 1925:—

(a) Total, 8.

(b) As part of a Housing Scheme, nil.

1. Unfit dwelling houses.

2. Remedy of defects without service of formal notice.

3. Action under Statutory Powers.

It is with the greatest satisfaction that I am able to report that the Council's Housing Scheme is now well under way, and that twenty houses are now in course of construction.

It is expected that ten will be ready for occupation before Midsummer. As evidence that the need for new houses was not exaggerated, it is only necessary to state that about forty applications have been received for these houses, nearly all from working men already in the district.

It will now be possible for me to report to the Council, and advise the closure of many dwellings, which are not fit for habitation, and this work is now in hand.

As I stated in my last Annual Report, this work, as well as reporting on overcrowding, has for a long time been very unsatisfactory, and in many cases, a mere farce.

Now that houses are available at a rental within the reach of the better-paid workmen, I have little doubt that by the time a certain amount of "general post" shifting round has been accomplished, and a few totally unfit houses eliminated, the housing conditions of the Urban District will be better than for many generations.

In conclusion, I have the pleasure, as usual, of thanking the Chairman and members of the Council, for the very kindly manner in which they have invariably supported me.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

Hyder R. Wainman

